

Principles of Restoration

Ezekiel 36: 22-37

8/31/03

Intro

- Football season is upon us!

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At this point in the story of Ezekiel, the exiles have just heard that the city of Jerusalem has been destroyed, the very thing that Ezekiel said would happen. Now they know that there is indeed a true prophet among them.

But God wants to encourage them with Words of hope and so Ezekiel prophesies that God wants to restore.

There are great words of encouragement for us in these verses because many people today feel their lives are wasted and destroyed.

These, then, are the principles of restoration.

I. God promises restoration

A. As an act of grace

- Not because of our deserving, but God's desire
- Not because of our dedication, but God's reputation. (We carry His name)

Vs 22 & 32 – God doesn't do this because we earned it, or deserved it, but because it declares His glory.

Deut 9:6, "Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people."

Deut 7:7, "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you... know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments."

B. He will gather you

- Jerusalem was wasted and destroyed as a consequence to their own sin; either individually or corporately.
- The process of restoration must begin with drawing near to the Lord.

James 4:8, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you."

Hebrews 10:22, "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

C. He will sprinkle clean water

- There are several pictures of the cleansing of the Lord in the scriptures.
- He uses clean water as a picture of the washing.

Illus – Washing the disciples' feet, Peter said, "Not me, Lord..."

- He also uses the picture of a hot coal as in Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are read like crimson, they will be like wool.”

- Cleansing is always an essential part of restoration.

II. The heart is the key to restoration

A. He will give a new heart and a new spirit

- The key is to understand that this is what God does.

Psalms 51:10, “create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Illus – Someone once said that religion is just a crutch. My problem is not that I had bad leg, but rather that I had a bad heart.

2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

B. He will remove the heart of stone

- The heart can be very hard and very cold.

Jeremiah 18:12 – “But they will say, “It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his own heart.”

- The problem of hard hearts is that they are unteachable and insensitive to the things of the Lord.
- Instead, he will give us a heart of flesh.

C. He changes our desires

- Because it is His Spirit within us...
- Law is gaining approval based on what we do; this is a performance based relationship.
- But now God approves because of what he has done in us.
 - Placed His Holy Spirit within us
 - Gave us the righteousness of Jesus Christ
- How can we improve on that?
- Now we want to do that which pleases Him.

Illus – Ares, the interpreter, taught us a new song...”My desire.”

Psalms 37:4, “Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

III. Rebuilding is part of restoration

Vs 29

A. He will call for the fruit

- It is God who will call for the fruit.

- Doing something for the Lord, having fruit from our relationship to Him is a right desire.
- **Is it ever too late?**

Psalm 92:12-14, “The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree; he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age: they will be full of sap and very green.”

- Fruit comes from sowing to the Spirit.

Galatians 6:8b-10, “but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

B. He will rebuild the wasted places

Vs 33

- The city was wasted and desolate, but it will be rebuilt.
- The desolate land will become like the “**Garden of Eden.**”

Joel 2:25, “Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the creeping locust, the stripping locust, and the gnawing locust.”

C. He will allow us to “ask of Him”

- As the Lord heals He then moves us toward godly purpose in our lives

Illus – when you hit your thumb with a hammer, all you can think about is the pain. Same is true spiritually, after the healing, we can focus in godly purpose.

- Vs 37 – God wants to partner with us in what he is doing.
- He invites us to “ask of Him” in the process of rebuilding.

Psalm 2:8, “ask of Me, and I will give the nations as an inheritance.”

- He has decided in His sovereign will, to work through our prayers, therefore He wants us to “**ask of Him.**”

James 4:2b-3, “**You do not have because you do not ask.**

You ask and do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it in your worldly pleasures.”

Conclusion

One of the greatest hopes we have is that Jesus Christ restores our lives from wasted places to lives of godly fruit.